

CIRCULAR

OF

MR. JAMES B. BOWLIN,

TO HIS CONSTITUENTS,

THE

VOTERS OF THE FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

OF

MISSOURI.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED AT THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE OFFICE.

1850.

1847-1848

1847-1848

1847-1848

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CIRCULAR.

To the People of the

First Congressional District of Missouri:

FELLOW-CITIZENS:—After seven years' mutual interchange of sentiments and opinions, in a period of devoted labor in your service, not without errors on my part, but always with generosity enough on yours to spread the mantle of charity over them, I am again emboldened to present myself for a renewal of that confidence which you have so kindly manifested on former occasions. I am the more encouraged in this, from the consciousness of the fact, that whatever political faults may be laid to my charge, malice itself cannot embrace in the catalogue the crime of being unmindful of your interests, or unfaithful in the preservation of the sacred trust you have committed to my care. And whatever reproaches have been heaped upon me, they have had to find their aliment, not in the records of my acts and deeds as your representative, but beyond them, and in contradiction of them. In registering, by my votes and speeches, the embodied opinions and principles of my constituents, I have at least made up such a record as challenges investigation, and defies reproach from Democrats. And whatever fate may await me for the future, I have the proud consolation left me, of feeling that the blush of shame will never suffuse the cheek of a Democratic constituent for any act of mine. Yet in the face of all this, by a political intrigue, which it becomes my duty to expose and hold up for public reprobation, I am forced into a position uncongenial to my tastes, but one necessary to protect my own honor, and make your rights respected. Relying upon the soundness of my principles, my past labors in your service, but more upon your confiding generosity, and in the absence of anything like a regular convention to nominate, I have become a Democratic candidate for Congress.

It is to me a source of regret, that circumstances

rendered it almost impossible that any regular convention could be held, as it is a method of embodying public sentiment in the choice of candidates which cannot be too highly prized. To be valid, however, it should be, what it purports to be, the true reflector of the sentiments of the majority of the party, and not an instrument in the hands of faction, to defeat the popular will. To the decisions of a convention, constituted with a view to reflect the public will, no man yields a readier obedience than myself, without regard to matters of formality, for plausible exceptions may be taken to any form of convention. All I would ask, would be a manifest design to reflect popular sentiment, and not defeat it, to command my hearty approval. But when it is evident that a few managers, availing themselves of a dissension in the party, get up by irregular means the mere skeleton of a convention, to overthrow the popular will, it becomes one of the sacred obligations of patriotism to resist it to the last. Every friend of the convention system, who would preserve it in its purity, has an imperative duty imposed upon him, to resist such a burlesque upon the institution. The convocation at Cape Girardeau was no convention, even if it had reflected the public will as far as it went—which every man of reflection knows it did not—because it only pretended to represent three counties out of seventeen in the first district.

But in order to a perfect understanding of the nature and character of the Cape Girardeau convention, it may be proper to view the elements out of which it sprung. My own county is made to figure in the record, as the chief actor in getting it up—indeed, I might say, as making the convention herself, and that antagonistical to me, and for the exclusive benefit of a stranger, almost unknown to her people. The convention was brought into existence, not to confer together and select a candidate, but to ratify a preëxisting de-

termination of the leaders in favor of one, whose name and pretensions they dared not trust before the meeting, as demonstrated by every act. I am no egotist, but assert it, because I believe it, that the meeting who were made to create an organization against me, were twenty to one in my favor if the question had been openly and fairly submitted to it, between me and my competitor. A meeting in my own town, amongst my own personal and political friends, were neither trusted with the expression of an opinion about their choice, nor, according to long-established usage, with the election of their delegates; but in lieu of that, a little resolution was passed through amongst a mass of resolutions, empowering the president of the meeting to appoint delegates, without restriction as to time. It was not only necessary to give the power to one man, but to keep its exercise out of view until the meeting adjourned, lest they would discover the outrage, and resume their rights. And I entertain no doubt that the mass of that meeting were as much astounded when they discovered, through the press next day, this surrender of their rights, as I was to see such a violation of the usages of the party. It is very evident from the proceedings, that the candidate was selected before the meeting was held, else why not submit his pretensions to the meeting, if they were seeking to ascertain public sentiment? If I had been the favorite of the managers, they would not have been afraid to have submitted my name to an ordeal through which it had passed triumphantly on more trying occasions than that. And it is a fact worthy of note, that in a population of eighty thousand, it required more than a week to find men enough to constitute the delegation who were to reflect the meeting's sentiment on this subject, and then did not succeed without some mistake. They had certainly struck upon a popular theme, when they could not find men enough in the county to complete the delegation to carry it out. But the order for the nomination had gone forth, and it had to be executed, regardless of obstacles from the popular will. And this was the delegation that constituted the controlling power in the convention, who vain-gloriously assumed to make a nomination, and now ask the independent voters of the first district to ratify their acts. So much for St. Louis, that gave the controlling majority in the convention. But there were two other counties that are assumed to have been represented in that convocation, viz: Ste. Genevieve and Cape Girardeau. Ste. Genevieve selected her delegates at a township meeting, held in the country, away from the county seat; and there is a marvelous similarity,

in the names of the delegates, and the names that figured in the proceedings of the meeting. There were, doubtless, more in attendance in that mass meeting than constituted the delegation, and I only regret that they did not have the gratification of seeing their names in the newspapers.

" 'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print—
A book 's a book, although there 's nothing in 't."

Cape Girardeau was represented by a process, only one remove from Ruckerism. They did not exactly wheel into the convention, being found on the ground, but organized themselves into a town meeting on the very day the convention of one misrepresented county and one township met, and made themselves members of that august body. This is certainly the rarest convention of modern times. With a becoming modesty, that well contrasts, the Ste. Genevieve Convention refused to nominate, with six counties represented. And the former is the convention, whose acts the voters of the first congressional district are called upon to endorse and ratify as a legitimate expression of the opinion of the Democracy. In the present condition of the party, torn asunder by conflicting opinions, it would be almost literally impossible to obtain a fair expression of opinion, if every county in the district had been represented, as it could only be the reflector of the sentiments of a section of it. Then how much more ridiculous does it become, when one section of the party from three counties undertakes to dictate to both sections of the whole district?

But the St. Louis meeting, not satisfied with the manner in which the convention was organized by it, or afraid of the potency of my pretensions, had to proceed one step further, and exclude me from the pale of their convention. The means adopted for accomplishing that was as novel and extraordinary as it was vicious and arrogant. It was nothing more nor less than to require of me, as the free representative of a free people, to take an open pledge of fealty to a colleague and his views and opinions. I venture to assert, that the history of government and of parties presents no parallel to this. We are colleagues, representing the same constituency, only in different forms, coequal in everything but the naked dignity of position; and I am required, as a condition precedent to having a hearing in that convention, to sacrifice my own independence and your interests to the imperious will of a colleague. To take such a pledge, as a man, I should feel myself dishonored; to take it as a representative of the people, and thereby barter away my own privileges and your constitutional rights, in my freedom of action, would have been disgraceful in the very last degree. Such pledges between colleagues, representing the same

constituency in different forms, is against the whole spirit and genius of our institutions. The very manner of our elections contemplates differences of opinion, and checks and balances upon each other, and not servile humility from one to the other. I am the direct Representative of the people, and the local interests of a district; he is the Representative of a State in her sovereignty; and if I were to yield to the unconditional fealty, contemplated in the pledge, my district at least would have no legitimate Representative. It is a pledge no Representative dare take, or keep if taken, if he has any respect to his oath, or his constitutional obligations. And this was the impossible condition submitted to me, by way of raising a pretext for an organized opposition in my own city. It has accomplished its first object; how far it will succeed in its next, is a matter to be determined at the polls by the voice of a free people who scorn all homage, save to their God.

A peculiarity worth noticing in this connection is, that this pledge of loyalty, so potent, as its authors would have us believe, in preserving and perpetuating a pure democracy, has not been deemed of importance enough to be submitted to any Representative in Congress, save myself. No member, I undertake to say, would dare to take it and face his fellows, whatever might be his partiality for the object of it. It is too humiliating, it is too senseless. There is no meaning in it, as the members of Congress can in no contingency act upon the pretensions of Senators, unless it is to be found in the scheme of getting up a pretext for opposition.

The masses of that meeting, constituting ardent and kind friends of mine, I am convinced, had nothing to do with getting up this strange resolution; and had the undisguised truth been told them that night, that it was but a scheme to sever the bonds of friendship between us, and place me in a false position to them, they would have repudiated it with such a thundering shout as would have appalled its concoctors. I now tell them that truth, and appeal to them to suffer no pride of opinion to wed them to an error, or to ratify a fraud. I invoke them, in the name of our mutual political faith, by our hopes in that glorious Democracy which we have made triumphant in so many a well-fought contest, by all the reminiscences of the past and our bright hopes of the future, to rally as one man to the rescue of our cherished principles from the madness of some of their own disciples. In this unnatural contest they are all staked against the mere foppery of human adulation, and must be redeemed if we would not fall an easy prey to our opponents.

The unhappy differences that have existed in our party in Missouri during the last year, are familiar to you all, and equally familiar to you, no doubt, the course I deemed it my duty to pursue. And as misrepresentation has been rife upon this subject, I avail myself of this opportunity to set myself right before my constituents upon the facts, and vindicate my motives. No man regretted more sincerely than I did those unhappy divisions in the Democracy of my own State, and no man struggled harder, amidst reproaches and uncharitable speculations, to calm the storm, and preserve the harmony of a party which had always proved victorious when united. Aside from all personal considerations, nothing could give me more pain than to contemplate the indomitable Missouri Democracy falling a prey to political dissensions amongst themselves; and if it should be our fate, by divisions of our strength, to yield up a victory to our political opponents, I shall retain the proud consolation of knowing that I have done everything in my power to avoid such a result, and have suffered much by submitting to reproaches whilst striving by peaceful efforts to allay the storm. It would be doing but poor credit to my political sagacity to suppose that my course of neutrality in that unfortunate conflict was dictated by ambition to promote my own prospects. That is not and never was the road to an ephemeral popularity, but rather to mount the storm and ride no matter where it drives. But there are times and occasions when a man should be unselfish enough to sacrifice something in an effort to maintain union and harmony in a cause sanctified by the purest spirit of patriotism; and I regarded this as peculiarly one. When I saw the storm in the distance, and anticipated the breakers upon which our party might be wrecked, unless we could avoid them by calm judgment and moderate counsels, I took my position, not to conceal political opinions (as falsely, alleged) but to calm the fury of the elements, that seemed to be driving everything to destruction. I determined then to take no part in this unhappy conflict, which I soon foresaw must degenerate into personalities and become violent, but to maintain firmly and consistently my own political principles, based upon the great national Democratic platform, and illustrated by my votes and speeches through a series of years. To that determination I continued strictly to adhere, changing in nothing that course of action upon measures which has again and again received your sanction and approval. Indeed I was vain enough to suppose that the representative of the first congressional district might be presumed to have some opinions of his own, without being pinned in faith to the

sleeve of any one; and as long as those opinions accorded with the views of his constituents, and he labored faithfully to carry them out, it would be satisfactory, without swearing fealty to any one, or thrusting himself unbidden into a conflict. I supposed my constituents were mainly interested in being kept advised of my views and actions upon political subjects as they arose, without requiring me to assume the judgment seat, to pass upon the conduct of others with whom I had to act, and over whose action I had no control. And I have reason to believe that my course, though assailed by both extremes, has received the cordial approval of a generous constituency, despite all efforts to breed discord in the first district.

Another reason I had for not entering into a political contest with which I had necessarily no direct connection, was the consideration of the importance to the public interest that proper social relations should be preserved amongst all the representatives of the same people. If a feud sprung up between rival factions for the ascendancy in the State, it appeared to me to be irrational and unwise in a member of Congress to forfeit the friendship or excite the animosity of either, by a voluntary or forced intermeddling in their contest. There were certainly no relations between us requiring it, as in no part of my public duty could I be called upon to pass judgment in the case; and sound policy certainly dictated that I should preserve the relations of courtesy and social intercourse with all my colleagues, by abstaining from uncharitable imputations on any. I therefore determined, from the first, not to suffer my relations with any of my colleagues to be changed, with my assent, in consequence of our unhappy political dissensions, by which a cordial coöperation on measures for the benefit of our common constituency might be much embarrassed, if not entirely destroyed. In accomplishing this, I made no sacrifice of principle, as I sternly exercised the right of carrying out my own views in accordance with what I believed to be the views of my constituents; and claimed the right of suffering none to question me in relation to my own opinions, whilst I as properly abstained from questioning any one in relation to theirs; and where we differed, left it to the arbitrament of our mutual constituents. That this policy, so essential to the interest of the people, did not succeed, was neither owing to any defect in itself, nor the want of effort on my part to preserve it, but to a spirit of intolerance which brooks no freedom of opinion, and recognizes no equality of right amongst colleagues representing a common constituency. These are but the repe-

tition of opinions submitted in a friendly letter to Judge Atchison a year ago, urging him to keep out of the quarrel if he could; and which he will no doubt remember.

But a higher reason still arose in my mind, to influence my judgment, in the fact that Colonel Benton was a Senator of the State, and the representative, in part, of her character and dignity; and whatever of evil attached to him in such a conflict, must, to some extent, be reflected back upon the State and the people. My anxiety was to avoid such a result, not contribute to it. My hopes of an equitable and honorable adjustment of all the questions—of a returning sense of justice towards the institutions of our cherished State—of a final reconciliation of all differences in our party, were large, even amidst the fiercest of the contest; and I struggled, but I find in vain, to produce what I so ardently desired—union and harmony. No matter with what political errors he might have been charged; no matter what departures from the old track may have been alleged to have been prompted by the illusions of ambition and the lust of power; no matter what political associations he may have been fancied to have formed—I still could not forget that he was the Senator of the State; and I was unwilling, by any act of mine, through him, to cast the slightest shade upon the disc of her glory. If the political integrity of Missouri was destined to suffer through the alleged dereliction of one of her boasted statesmen, it presented no charms to me to become the chronicler of her misfortune. That, I preferred, should be the work of another hand than mine. I would have blotted out from the world, if I could, the remembrance of our family sins. The Scriptures afford us a beautiful lesson on this subject, which I was always anxious to apply. They tell us, that when Noah became drunk with wine, and was lying in his tent, with his person exposed to the derision of Ham, his two other sons hearing of their father's misfortune, seized each the corner of a mantle, and drawing it on their shoulders walked backwards, that their eyes might not be offended with the sight, and spread it over him, concealing his nakedness from the mockery of the world. So would I with Missouri, and her sons, whose history is a part of her history, whether it is a history of glory or of shame. And if ever the latter should be attached to her, I would seize the mantle, walk backwards, and cover up the sin—forever, if I could.

These were the reasons influencing my own mind to adopt the course I did; and not the slightest embarrassment as to principles which I had uniformly maintained. Some of my colleagues

took a different course, which, though I did not approve at the time, I am now constrained to say was a much wiser one. They anticipated what I did not, that there was to be no escape from the conflict, and met it earlier, and thereby avoided concentrating its fury within the space of a couple of months preceding our election. My policy of being silent where I could not approve all the acts of a colleague, has wholly failed, by a war from whose tendency was too well calculated to benefit—as sudden as it is furious, and admirably timed for effect; but, supported by a generous constituency, I will yet recover the field, and redeem the mistake by a glorious victory over Whiggery. The day, the hour, has come, when the unterrified Democracy of the first congressional district, upon whose banner victory has always perched, must strike the decisive blow, if they would maintain their cherished institutions against the encroachments of political power, under the false garb of a sentimental philanthropy. If they would be the arbiters of their own fate—if they would be the vindicators of their own rights—if they would be the protectors of their own institutions—they should resist, with manly firmness and energy, this first attempt to ingraft upon the politics of Missouri the infamous platform of the Buffalo Convention.

For my refusal to sacrifice the interest of my district, to become a mere puppet, these St. Louis managers, through their organ, tell me I “cannot serve two masters;” and, in reply, I would tell them in the spirit of a freeman, and as the honored representative of a free people, that I should never try to serve one. I acknowledge no master but my God; and hold myself responsible to no power under Heaven for my political course, but a generous and confiding constituency. This was beautiful language for them to hold to me, who had borne every manner of reproach, submitted in silence to every species of abuse, rather than array myself against a man I had so long honored, even in vindication of my own principles. For his sake, where I could not approve, I chose to be silent. His opponents saw from the journals that we had often differed in our votes, and that I could not give an unlimited endorsement to his views, without libeling my own character for integrity; and with true partisan policy pressed me constantly to take sides in the unhappy controversy, and assailed me violently because I would not. Yet I patiently bore it all, and maintained my silence—a compliment at least to Colonel Benton, which should have been appreciated. And the recompense, now tendered me for all this, is to seize upon the occasion of my election, with a

Whig in the field, and demand of me to libel the history of my political life, and swear fealty to his person and opinions, under the penalty of a threatened opposition. If my election had been a year off, I flatter myself there would have been no such manifest anxiety to cultivate a quarrel with me; and I can tell those gentlemen, that they have mistaken their man, if they suppose any dread of defeat could counsel me to dishonor. And whilst I do not endorse the modern doctrine, of preferable Whigs, I must confess my nerves are not much agitated at the prospect before me. I know my constituents too well, to suppose they can be used to execute the mandates of ingratitude, or abandon one whose greatest sin was loyalty to their principles.

Having said this much in relation to my own course upon the unhappy divisions in Missouri, I shall now proceed to notice other subjects, which have been forced into this canvass, or which directly interest you. As they are numerous, and this circular limited, I shall necessarily be brief on each, but sufficiently elaborate to define fully my positions.

The first in the list of subjects, appears Colonel Benton's appeal; and as that is an abstract proposition which has assumed the character of a test, I will define my positions upon it in a few words; and as consistency may be esteemed a great virtue upon that subject, I will begin by giving my first impressions and expression upon it. On the morning the appeal made its appearance, to the general surprise of everybody, I hastened to the Union office, to deliberate upon this new condition of affairs. I there met many persons and heard many grave opinions, for and against it, and amongst the rest I gave my own, which I am now induced to believe laid the foundation for all the intrigues that have been gotten up against me. I maintained simply, that the right of appeal from the legislature to the people could not be controverted, unless you assumed for the agent a superiority to the principal—I therefore admitted the right of appeal to the people as the highest tribunal in the land, but insisted, according to all Democratic usage, that the appellant in such a case should place himself on an entire equality of position with the people whose ultimate decision he invoked. That to appeal, whilst the party held his position, enabling him to abide the decision or not, as he chose, could not be vindicated upon any principle of right, usage, or justice. That the appeal ought to have been preceded with a resignation, and that its not being so, involved the question of instruction itself; and predicted at the time, that in two months, under such an appeal, the merits of the resolutions appealed from would be

lost in a fierce conflict over the great Democratic principle of the right of instruction. I also urged that in resigning he made a stronger case, and had nothing to fear, if the people clearly sustained his position; if they did not, to hold on against their wishes and views, was a wrong that could not be justified. The supposed enmity of the Governor was urged as a reason for not resigning. To that I replied, that the appointment could not be regarded by the Governor as a personal matter, but rather as the exercise of a high political prerogative, and under the circumstances, he would not dare to appoint hastily, or any one else, if the people clearly sustained the principles of the appeal. These were the opinions I gave before the ink was dry in which the appeal was printed—and I retain the same views yet. The great Democratic principle of the right of instruction, is one of the essential elements of our beautiful political system; and when that is destroyed, the people have but a poor security for the faithful exercise of their delegated authority. To preserve the blessings of liberty, and maintain in their purity our glorious institutions, the people must retain other checks upon the representatives than mere chartered restrictions—they must preserve a healthful state of public sentiment, and learn their agents to feel, that to violate that, were as ruinous to their prospects, as to trample the Constitution under foot, and that the end of their term was not the only day of retribution. I have always been an advocate for the right of instruction in its purity and in its most enlarged sense, and shall continue to maintain it, as one of the essential elements of popular liberty in a representative Government. It is enough, in my opinion, that the representative should know, no matter how, the sentiments of his constituents, to warrant his being held to a strict accountability, to carry them out in everything that did not conflict with his views of the Constitution, and the obligation of his oath; and in that case, resignation should be the remedy. This doctrine results from the very nature and character of the whole American theory of Government, that the sovereignty of the State resides in the people, and that the popular will is supreme, within the limits it imposes upon itself by written constitutions.

With regard to the legislative resolutions of 1849, which have been productive of so fierce a conflict in our State, they involve a series of questions on the subject of slavery forced into the canvass, and about which it becomes obligatory for every one to give an opinion, who is a solicitor for public favor. And these resolutions have been so much discussed, so critically reviewed, so

wildly denounced, and so warmly eulogized, that it becomes almost impossible to divest the mind of the over-heightened colorings that have been thrown around them, and subject them to a calm, philosophic review, even if the length of a circular permitted.

Another embarrassment that surrounds everything connected with these resolutions, is the fact, that our political friends have so completely separated upon them, are so diversified in sentiment about their construction, that it is difficult to give a judgment, without inflicting imaginary wounds, where it would be the greatest desire to heal conflicting opinions. But it has become an imperative duty to submit my whole views and opinions upon this slavery question, from which no personal considerations should restrain me. In doing so, I shall not attempt a critical review of the resolutions of 1849, with my reasons for my opinions, as that of itself would be a task far beyond the limits of a circular; but shall submit my own views upon the whole slavery question, in the briefest possible manner suited to the limits of this paper. Before, however, I proceed to the questions themselves, it may be proper to submit a few remarks upon my personal relations to the subject. Born in a southern State, reared and educated beneath a southern sun, it is natural that my feelings and prejudices should be strongly enlisted in support of southern institutions. This natural impulse imperceptibly guided me, when wandering from my native land in quest of fortune, in fixing the spot of a future home. But with all my partialities for the South and southern institutions, and my unalterable determination to maintain them by all constitutional means, I am constrained to acknowledge, in a portion of it at least, that there is one political heresy to which I never can subscribe, and that is, setting up nullification and disunion as a remedy for political evils. They never can be remedies for anything, except amidst a conflict of arms in civil strife, when there will be nothing left for the application of their healing powers. To talk about remedying a political evil by a peaceful severance of this great Confederacy, bound together by a Constitution the work of our patriot fathers—by so many glorious reminiscences of the past—by so many bright and brilliant hopes of the future,—has always been, in my judgment, the refined essence of unadulterated political folly. It cannot be done. It is madness to speculate upon it. We must protect our rights within the pale of the Constitution, even if force—which God forbid—should ever be necessary. Against every form of aggression upon southern rights and southern institutions, direct or remote, I am

prepared to go as far as he who goes the furthest, in resistance; but it must be beneath the broad stripes and bright stars of the Confederacy. It must be within, not without, the Union.

Entertaining these views, I have uniformly acted with the South upon all the agitating questions growing out of this subject of slavery, since I first took my seat in Congress, without, as far as I am aware of, a single exception in our legislative action—not upon sectional considerations, but upon those broad principles of constitutional right which constitute the basis of our national Democracy. Two years ago, when there was an effort made to invade my district with the doctrines of the Buffalo platform, from an organization in St. Louis, I issued to you a circular, resisting the vile heresies, and exposing generally my views and opinions upon the subject. As a specimen of my views at that day, I quote a couple of sentences from that circular:

“All that the slave States demand is non-interference, and the Baltimore Convention has declared that as an article of the Democratic faith, upon which, as a party, we mean to stand on the subject. And I, as your Representative, stand with the party pledged to non-interference with our domestic institutions, and ready to repel every attempt to violate that right secured to us by the Constitution.”

These are views given to you two years ago, and to which I still adhere. And it is this non-interference principle in the compromise bill, which is peculiarly an article in the faith of the national Democracy, that renders it acceptable to them. It is supported by the great body of the party, North and South, (except ultras at each end,) and its adoption (repudiating all unjust restriction upon the territories) will quiet agitation, give peace to the country, and firmly establish a great Democratic principle that will preserve harmony in the future.

I have not mingled much in the debates upon the subject of slavery since I have been in Congress, because to do so, I deemed incompatible with the principles I maintained, and never, save where it was drawn in incidentally. I brought with me into public life a firm conviction, that Congress had no constitutional right to interfere with the institution, as it existed; and to be consistent, I would not contribute to agitate a question, over which we had no power to legislate. I therefore set my face against discussion as a principle of right, not to debate things beyond our scope of legislative action; and a principle of policy, to discourage the ravings of fanaticism. Had this policy prevailed, and had the South simply treated with silent contempt every effort to agitate questions affecting her rights in her property, even the genius of Adams could not have kept the question alive; and abolitionism would

have died the death of the ridiculous, long before it became strong enough to spawn free-soilism on the country. But unfortunately for us, we had our southern Hotspurs, as well as northern Wilberforces—and chivalry must needs take a pass at arms with fanaticism. This, in my opinion, gave the subject an importance which it could never otherwise have obtained, and of which we are now reaping the bitter fruits of agitation at the expense of the national tranquillity.

Believing as I did, and still do, that the wise framers of our Constitution designed giving to Congress no power over that subject, except in the specified cases enumerated in that instrument, to wit, for abolishing the slave trade, and the recapture of fugitive slaves, and intended, as manifested in the whole letter and spirit of that instrument, to leave all the rest to the domestic policy of the States where it existed, as part of their social and political system. I have regarded every attempt to legislate upon it here, either directly upon the States, or anywhere else, with a view ultimately to affect it in the States, to say the least of it, as at war with the compromises of the Constitution, and against the whole spirit of that charter of our rights. The framers of that instrument certainly never could have designed to leave a domestic institution, peculiar to a portion of the States only, in which it had become interwoven with all the forms of society, a subject for legislative regulation of the whole; and therefore left it under the exclusive control of the domestic policy of the States; and it constituted one amongst the most important features of their reserved rights. And what sort of a reserved right would that be, which only protected them from the open battery of the assailant, whilst it allowed them gradually to undermine the works and overthrow the citadel? If the States would protect this reserved right, resistance must be made upon the very threshold, by standing upon the ramparts of the Constitution, and demanding the authority for the invasion—the clause in that instrument warranting legislation upon the subject by Congress.

The first time I was drawn into discussion upon the subject, was upon the annexation of Texas, in 1844. There it became a legitimate subject of discussion, as annexation was resisted upon that ground, and the objections had to be met and answered. In that speech I maintained, that as slavery was an institution sanctioned by the Constitution, there could be no national objections to admission on that ground; and to meet individual objections, I urged, at some length, that the enlargement of the area of the institution did not increase its numbers, whilst it certainly ameliorated the condition

of the slave—and in that, it was an act of humanity. I also met the argument of the North, founded upon the increase of political power, at length—all of which was laid before you, and by you approved in my subsequent election.

The next question of importance upon this exciting subject, was the introduction of the celebrated Wilmot proviso to a bill proposing to appropriate money for the purpose of negotiating a peace. It defeated the first bill, but at the next session we succeeded in carrying the three million bill, without this miserable appendage. Peace followed, a large amount of territory was acquired by the war, which became, and has continued, a fruitful source of agitation ever since, under a constant pressure to apply this proviso to all the acquired territories. This wretched device, to excite sectional warfare, and array one portion of the Confederacy against the other, under the plea of philanthropy, but in reality for political power, I have resisted, from the day it showed its hydra head in the Halls of Congress, and shall continue to resist it whilst I have a voice in the councils of the nation. It boldly proposes to exclude the institution of slavery, not by the will of the people of the territories, but by an act of Congress, from all the territory acquired by the treaty with Mexico. And pending this agitation, California has established a constitution, and is now demanding admission into the Union. She by her constitution excludes slavery. Against the application of this proviso, we have made a constant, and I believe a successful war, as far as the mere thing itself is concerned; but the application of California for admission, with her anti-slavery constitution, with the two territories ready to follow her example, gives a changed aspect to the question, which tends to confound positions. The split is no longer upon the proviso in name, but upon the admission of California as a separate measure. Every man who is at heart a proviso man, is for the separate admission, because, if California with her free constitution is once out of the way, they then hazard nothing in agitating the proviso for the territories. If they can apply it, all their ends are accomplished; if they cannot, they can secure agitation on the subject; keep the southern people out by such agitation, until they, like California, shall come with free constitutions for admission as States, and then the end is equally accomplished. And, strange to say, this doctrine of a separate admission, is advocated both by the Administration and by politicians who are anti-proviso men. And equally strange to say that some southern men are resisting the compromise, when a moment's reflection must teach

them, that on its failure, the other system of policy is almost certain to prevail, to the entire exclusion of southern slave property. I can perfectly understand the policy of the northern Whigs and Free-Soilers upon this subject, but there are others whose statesmanship is entirely beyond my comprehension.

The admission of California is a foregone conclusion; and no Democrat of the "non-interference" school, who stands upon the platform of the Baltimore Convention, resists her admission; because in framing her constitution she has exercised an undoubted right to establish her own domestic institutions in her own way. She will be admitted, either upon the principles of the compromise, or, that failing, as a separate measure. Extreme men need not palm the flattering unction to their souls that, by defeating the compromise, they keep out California; but, on the contrary, will produce the very evils of agitation which they so vividly portray. It is no longer a question of admission or non-admission of California, but one, whether we will admit California excluding the proviso from the sister territories; or admit her, leaving them open, either as an apple of discord, or for the application of the proviso. This is the question now. I am for the compromise, and am also for the admission of California—I want her to come in as a boon of national tranquillity; but she must come in at all events.

I opposed the proviso in its original form, not only because it was unjust, unfair, and partial, against a portion of the Confederacy, but because its spirit was aggressive, and, to say the least of it, at war with the spirit of those equitable compromises upon which the Constitution was founded. And it presents no more charms for me, as one of a system of measures, than it did in its original form. The same objections apply with equal force, whether the proviso is applied to the territories in so many words, or its effect to be produced by a system of measures to that end. I can see no difference, and shall resist every indirect means employed to give vitality to the odious measure.

A favorite measure with me, in adjusting the difficulties arising out of our acquired territories, was one that is now, owing to the course taken by California, but little speculated upon—I mean the Missouri compromise. It has many considerations to recommend it, but none so potent perhaps as the fact, that it has long received the national sanction, and no doubt would again, if established. But I fear now it is too late, at least for California. Those who should have been its friends have come too late to its rescue to secure its adoption.

And it is proper I should state that, acting for seven years as your Representative upon these questions, in every diversity of form, I have never given a vote that does not perfectly harmonize, in letter and spirit, with the principles above set forth.

In the struggle to adjust the questions growing out of our acquired territories, and at the same time securing the admission of California into the Union, three plans have been somewhat prominent, to which I now propose to invite your attention. The first is what is called the President's plan, known as the *non-action* plan. By this plan California is to be admitted as a separate measure, and the Territories of New Mexico and Utah are to be left to the mercy of God, General Taylor's military corps, and the humanity of the Indians. The essential qualities of this plan are to get California into the Union, and hold her two sisters in a situation to keep up agitation on this subject for another presidential campaign, when a southern man with northern principles may be necessary to the nation, to quiet the country. This plan has one virtue at least, and that is, that it is so bold and open that it can deceive no one. Its whole policy stands out in bold characters—not to allay excitement, but to increase it; and until a new presidential election at least is over, to give the country no repose. This scheme has very few advocates; it presents nothing to attach men to it; and the Administration has so effectually Galphimized itself as to gain very little from influence. The few that do stand up for it are northern Whigs, generally.

The next plan is to admit California as a separate measure, and give territorial governments to New Mexico and Utah—with or without the proviso—as accords with the tastes of the various advocates. This plan only differs from the President's in this, that it is willing to give civil governments to the territories and purchase out a boundary from Texas at immense cost. This plan advocates the separate admission of California, and gives governments to the territories with or without the proviso; but the misfortune is, that nearly every advocate of that plan is for it, for the express purpose of applying the proviso as soon as they can get them so separated as not to jeopardize California. This plan, if it should succeed, it will readily be perceived, will accomplish precisely the same ends as the President's plan, but is not so bold in avowing its object. Everybody here knows, that if California is admitted as a separate measure, that the moment the territorial bills come up in our House, the Wilmot proviso would be attached by a vote of forty majority,

and that they would have to pass with that incubus on them, or not pass at all; when they would fall into line with the President's scheme. The chief difference between it and the President's plan is, that the President's boldly avows its purpose on its face—this one holds “the word of promise to the ear, and breaks it to the hope.” The advocates of this plan, with a few honorable exceptions, are the out-and-out proviso men of our House, and I believe of the other. They are all anxious to get at the territorial bills separately, where they can have a full sweep with the proviso. The difference between these two plans is so slight that if either were adopted, it would be an equal triumph to the other.

The next and last plan to be noticed is the plan of the Committee of Thirteen. By this plan California is to be admitted upon her own constitution, the Territories of New Mexico and Utah to be organized into governments without any proviso, and the boundary line between New Mexico and Texas permanently fixed by a compensation to Texas—and all in one bill, called the compromise bill. The objects and evident design of this plan is, to harmonize conflicting elements, settle the whole question at once, defeat agitation upon the proviso, and give quiet to the country. The beauty of this plan is, that it admits California upon the Democratic principle—that a people in forming their constitution for admission into the Union, have the right to establish their own domestic institutions. And in regard to the territories, the Democratic doctrine of “non-interference,” is triumphantly vindicated. As my support of this measure has become a matter of assault on me by a portion of the party there, it becomes peculiarly proper that I should defend my positions on it. The opponents of this compromise and friends of the second plan, advocate every proposition in it as a separate measure, if I understand their position; and manifest a desire to give Texas more for a quiet boundary than is proposed by the compromise. Their opposition, then, would seem to be, simply to the combination of measures, which they call incongruous. There is no difference, then, between them and me on principle, as it regards the value of each and every one of these measures; and the only question, then, between us, is one of policy in combining them. I shall not attempt to inquire into their object in seeking to keep them separate—it will be enough to give my own reasons for seeking to keep them together. I am, then, for keeping them together to defeat the Wilmot proviso, and stop agitation on that fruitful but unprofitable subject. It is fair legislation in my mind, particularly upon meas-

ures as perfectly congruous as these are. California, in my opinion, can carry through her sisters without unnecessary embarrassment to her; and it will be infinitely better for her to come into the Union as a messenger of peace, than as a harbinger of discord. That if they are brought up as separate measures, I believe that the proviso would be at once attached to the territorial bills; and if it did not in the end defeat California, would at least destroy all hopes of an amicable adjustment of the questions. I am, for these, among many other reasons, decidedly in favor of the general plan of the compromise bill.

It might be supposed in a circular of this kind, with a Whig Administration in power, I should have much to say upon general politics; but the length of such a document, in the first place, will not allow it; and in the second place, it has demonstrated so little point in its policy, and such paucity of numbers in support of it, that it leaves hardly anything to aim a shaft at, except its sublime conceptions on the territorial questions. It clamors occasionally about protection and protective tariffs, to let the world know that they desire to keep up their distinctive character as Whigs, but there it ends—and the triumphs of the Independent Treasury has forever obliterated the idea of bringing up a national bank for that “better currency.” Indeed, it seems to have no fixed policy, nor power to render it formidable if it had. As far as the Whigs are concerned, it is a Tylerized Administration. The Whigs, with true instinct, are deserting the falling fabric, until to vindicate its measures is like openly advertising for place, as in the days of its last illustrious Whig predecessor. The only talent it has displayed is in squandering the treasury, and in that it is destined to become unrivalled. Like a true patriarch, it has not been unmindful of its own household, and the Galphins of the Treasury have waxed fat on the rich drippings from that sanctuary—and with patriotic spirit they cling on, lest another more hungry set might come in and devour the whole concern.

With regard to matters affecting your local and sectional interests, I can only say, that I have prosecuted them with all the energy, industry, and ability in my power. In relation to the swamps, my present prospects are very fair for success during this session. Indeed, I sincerely hope that I will be able to proclaim a triumph to you on that question before the election. In the bills which will pass, ample provisions are made to keep up the snag-boats, upon both the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; as also a liberal appropriation for the St. Louis harbor. I have also a fair prospect

of a liberal appropriation for a custom-house at St. Louis, and a grant of land for the Pacific railroad. We have just passed a bill through the House, making provisions for bounty lands for the soldiers of the war of 1812 and certain Indian wars, including Florida, &c., which I believe will pass the Senate. In brief, I am pressing your interests faithfully, in every particular.

One word to the Democracy of St. Louis. And I address myself to you particularly, because we have fought many a hard fight together for the supremacy of our principles; because you know me personally, and know me well, and more particularly, because your names have been used to perpetrate a wrong on me, which, if you had known at the time, your generosity would never have suffered. You, and you alone, in the hands of managing politicians, have been made, in the eyes of the world, to repudiate me and nominate another, by a system of tactics which, if they could be exposed, you would contemplate with horror. You were not even permitted to know the magician who pulls the wires in this performance, and yet you are called upon to ratify the deed. Could you know the directing spirit who laid this scheme to circumvent and impale me, and drive me into an apparent quarrel with my old friends, you would be startled to find yourself fighting under his banner.

Let me submit a few candid facts to you. Prior to the meeting on the 4th of May a small body of politicians had evidently determined that I was to be supplanted for General Rozier. This is demonstrated by the facts—First, that no name was submitted to the meeting, whilst General Rozier and myself were both candidates in the field. This was not the usual method, and there must be a cause for the departure. Second, the meeting was not intrusted to elect their delegates; nor the president required to appoint on the spot, so that errors might have been detected. This was certainly most strange, and against all the usages of the party. Third, a test resolution was gotten through that night, which General Rozier could take, but which I, in my position, could not, let the consequences to me be what they might. A letter is written to me, informing me of the test, dated the 6th May, mailed on the 7th, received on the 18th, the very day I was finally disposed of by a caucus at St. Louis. After that caucus the rumors to justify its work were put afloat, and when they had sufficiently prepared the public mind, I was denounced in the Union on the 29th on the faith of those rumors. My answer was mailed on the 23d of May, and was due there on the 31st, and as I got an unequivocal dose in the Union

about the 1st of June, I suppose it was regularly received. The next act in the drama was the meeting of the skeleton of a convention and nomination, which was so complete a burlesque on conventions, that it could be binding on no one.

To get up a rumor, and pick a quarrel with a politician, are two of the easiest things in the world. Rumor's a trumpet which everybody can blow, to just such tunes as suit their convenience or design; and as to the quarrel, you have only to ask a Representative to sacrifice his dignity and disgrace his constituency, in his person, and he will resent it, no matter what the sacrifice to himself.

In all this performance, ask yourselves, what part I had been acting. None at all. No part was assigned me, but to be the victim in the sacrifice, to appease the perturbed spirit of free-soilism, frightened at that army of "traffickers in flesh and blood."

And ask yourselves calmly, where I now am? I am standing precisely where I have always stood—on the broad basis of the National Democracy. If changes have been wrought, it is not in me. I stand on the same platform precisely where the great body of the National Democrats stand. To be sure of your bearings, ask yourselves, where stand General Cass, James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, Colonel King of Alabama, Mr. Dallas, Colonel Johnson, Andrew Stevenson of Virginia, and hundreds of others of the old Jackson guard, besides the Democracy in both branches of Congress, with very few exceptions? Ask yourselves this, and if you do not find me on the same plat-

form, discard me—if you do, however, discard the associations that would mislead and deceive you. I never have deceived you. I would not now attempt it, to secure twenty elections. I owe you too deep a debt of gratitude on the score of the past ever to cancel it by deception. You had nothing to do with the nomination; then discard it, and show to the managers that you are men, the same gallant men who have rendered the Democracy of St. Louis invulnerable in days gone by, and not mere instruments to be played upon.

To the district, I have only to say, in conclusion, that no nomination has been made but by a convention, which it is an insult to your judgments to call such. I have served you faithfully; and whilst I acknowledge my debt of gratitude for past favors, I conjure you, by all we hold dear in principle, to rally once more to the standard, so often rendered victorious by your indomitable courage. It is no common occasion. I am sought to be ostracized for my loyalty to your principles. Will you suffer it? No, never.

Beware of electioneering slanders. This is to be a bitter fight, and no means will be left untried to mislead and deceive you. Believe no scandal of me, which I have no opportunity to answer. Be true to yourselves, to your own cherished principles, and the flag of the Democracy shall again wave in triumph on the fifth of August.

Grateful for the past, and confident for the future triumphs of our cause, I subscribe myself your most obedient servant.

JAS. B. BOWLIN.

WASHINGTON, June 22, 1850.

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